

[57] What is claimed is:

1. A system for entering address data by an address owner and for providing real-time address information, the system consisting of an online address directory composed of at least one address entry, wherein said address entry contains

a name of an address owner;

an address for said address owner;

a beginning date for said address; and

an ending date for said address, and further wherein

said address and said beginning date and said ending date for said address may be changed by the address owner to reflect the address for said address owner on a specific date.

2. The system according to claim 1, wherein a person obtains said address in said online address directory by entering a unique identifier for said address owner and a date of interest into a query in said address directory, wherein said query returns an answer providing the address for said address owner on said date of interest.

3. The system according to claim 2, wherein access to said address directory is unrestricted.

4. The system according to claim 3, wherein said unrestricted access to the address entry for said address owner is set at the time the address entry is established.

5. The system according to claim 2, wherein access to said address directory is restricted, such that said person may obtain said address in said address directory only by means of a key provided with the address owner's permission.

6. The system according to claim 5, wherein said restricted access to the address entry for said address owner is set at the time the address entry is established.

7. The system according to claim 6, wherein said address owner permits access to said address entry to at least one person identified by said address owner at the time the address entry is established.

8. The system according to claim 7, wherein said address owner selects at least one person from a predetermined list of persons at the time the address entry is established.

9. The system according to claim 8, wherein at least one of said persons selected from said predetermined list of persons is a merchant.

10. The system according to claim 8, wherein at least one of said persons selected from said predetermined list of persons is a shipper.

11. The system according to claim 7, wherein an identity of a person requesting access to said address owner's address entry is verified at a time a request for access is made.

12. The system according to claim 7, wherein said key is a coded password, said coded password being provided to said person identified by the address owner at the time said person is identified.

13. The system according to claim 7, wherein said key is a hyperlink to a page in said online address directory, said hyperlink being provided to said person identified by the address owner at the time said person is identified.

14. The system according to claim 7, wherein said key is a personal identification number, said personal identification number being provided to said person identified by the address owner at the time said person is identified.

15. The system according to claim 11, wherein the identity of the person requesting access to said address owner's address entry is verified by verifying the source from which access is requested, wherein access is granted to persons from at least one source identified by the address owner at the time the address entry is established.

16. The system according to claim 5, wherein said permission to access said address owner's address entry in said online address directory is granted on a transaction-by-transaction basis.

17. A system for ordering merchandise, wherein an address owner selects a shipper from a list of at least one preselected shippers during a checkout process with a merchant, and further wherein the address owner directs said merchant to an online address directory to obtain a shipping address for said address owner on a date of delivery, said address owner further providing a unique identifier corresponding to said address owner for use in obtaining said address owner's address in said online address directory.

18. The system according to claim 17, wherein said merchandise is ordered in a transaction with said merchant, and further wherein said address owner directs said merchant to said online address directory by selecting said online address directory from a list of at least one preselected online address directories during a checkout process with said merchant.

19. The system according to claim 17, wherein said merchandise is ordered in a transaction with said merchant, and further wherein said address owner directs said merchant to said online address directory by providing a uniform resource locator of said online address directory during a checkout process with said merchant.

20. The system of claim 17, wherein access to said shipping address for said address owner in said online address directory is unrestricted.

21. The system of claim 20, wherein upon completion of said transaction, said merchant sends an electronic message to a data processor for said online address directory, indicating that said address owner has directed said merchant to said online address directory to obtain said shipping address for said address owner on a date of delivery and identifying a shipper selected by said address owner, wherein

said data processor first verifies the identity of the merchant,

said data processor then checks to see whether the address entry for said address owner is restricted, and

upon a determination that the address entry for said address owner is not restricted, said online address directory sends a return message to said merchant indicating that the address entry does not require use of a key, and further wherein

said merchant obtains said shipping address by entering the unique identifier for said address owner and the date of delivery into a query in said online address directory, wherein said query returns an answer providing said shipping address for said address owner on said date of delivery.

22. The system of claim 17, wherein access to said shipping address for said address owner in said online address directory may be made only by means of a key provided with said address owner's permission, and further wherein said address owner grants permission by directing said merchant to said online directory to obtain said shipping address for said address owner.

23. The system of claim 22, further wherein upon completion of said transaction, said merchant sends an electronic message to a data processor for said online address directory, indicating that said address owner has directed said merchant to said online address directory to obtain said shipping address for said address owner on a date of delivery, identifying the shipper selected by said address owner, and requesting a key to access the address entry for said address owner in said online address directory, wherein

said data processor first verifies the identity of the merchant,

said data processor then checks to see whether the address entry for said address owner is restricted, further wherein

upon a determination that the address entry for said address owner is restricted, said online address directory, said data processor for said online address directory checks to see whether said merchant has been preselected to receive said key by said address owner at the time said address owner established said address entry;

said data processor further checks to see whether said merchant previously has been preselected to receive said key by said address owner at the time said address owner established said address entry;

said data processor further checks to see whether said merchant has received said key,

said data processor further checks to see whether said previously provided key is valid; and

upon a determination that said previously provided key is valid,

said data processor sends a return message to said online merchant directing the online merchant to use said previously provided key to access the address entry for said address owner.

24. The system of claim 22, further wherein upon completion of said transaction, said merchant sends an electronic message to a data processor for said online address directory, indicating that said address owner has directed said merchant to said online address directory to obtain said shipping address for said address owner on a date of delivery, identifying the shipper selected by said address owner, and requesting a key to access the address entry for said address owner in said online address directory, wherein

said data processor first verifies the identity of the merchant,

said data processor checks to see whether the address entry for said address owner is restricted,

said data processor for said online address directory checks to see whether said merchant has been preselected by said address owner to receive said key at the time said address owner established said address entry;

said data processor further checks to see whether said merchant has previously been provided said key by virtue of having been preselected by said address owner at the time said address owner established said address entry;

said data processor further checks to see whether said previously provided key is valid; and

said data processor sends a return message to said online merchant providing said merchant with a key to access the address entry for said address owner.

25. The system according to claim 22, wherein said key is a coded password, and further wherein said merchant obtains said shipping address on said date of delivery by entering said unique identifier corresponding to said address owner, said date of delivery, and said coded password into a query in said online address directory, wherein said query returns an answer providing said shipping address for said address owner on said date of delivery.

26. The system according to claim 22, wherein said key is a hyperlink to a page in said online address directory, and further wherein said merchant obtains said shipping address for said address owner on said date of delivery by entering said unique identifier for said address owner and said date of delivery into a query contained on said page in said online address directory, wherein said query returns an answer providing said shipping address for said address owner on said date of delivery.

27. The system according to claim 22, wherein said merchant forwards said key to a shipper, and further wherein said shipper uses said key to obtain said address owner's shipping address on said date of delivery.

28. The system of claim 17, wherein during a checkout process with said merchant, said address owner elects that access to said shipping address for said address

owner in said online address directory may be made only by means of a key provided with said address owner's permission, and further wherein said address owner grants permission by directing said merchant to said online directory to obtain said shipping address for said address owner.

29. The system of claim 28, further wherein upon completion of said transaction, said merchant sends an electronic message to a data processor for said online address directory, indicating that said address owner has directed said merchant to said online address directory to obtain said shipping address for said address owner on a date of delivery, identifying a shipper selected by said address owner, indicating that said address owner has elected to make access to said address entry restricted, and requesting that a key for accessing said address entry be provided, wherein

said data processor first verifies the identity of the merchant, and further wherein

said data processor sends a return message to said online merchant providing said merchant with a key to access the address entry for said address owner.

30. The system according to claim 29, wherein said key is a coded password, and further wherein said merchant obtains said shipping address on said date of delivery by entering said unique identifier corresponding to said address owner, said date of delivery, and said coded password into a query in said online address directory, wherein said query returns an answer providing said shipping address for said address owner on said date of delivery.

31. The system according to claim 29, wherein said key is a hyperlink to a page in said online address directory, and further wherein said merchant obtains said shipping address for said address owner on said date of delivery by entering said unique identifier for said address owner and said date of delivery into a query contained on said page in said online address directory, wherein said query returns an answer providing said shipping address for said address owner on said date of delivery.

32. The system according to claim 29, wherein said merchant forwards said key to a shipper, and further wherein said shipper uses said key to obtain said address owner's shipping address on said date of delivery.

33. The system according to according to claim 1, wherein said address entry is anonymous, and further wherein said address entry may be accessed only by means of a key provided with the address owner's permission.

34. The system according to claim 33, wherein said anonymous nature of said address entry is selected by said address owner at the time said address entry is established.

35. The system according to claim 33, wherein said anonymous nature of said address entry is established on a transaction-by-transaction basis.

36. The system according to claim 34, wherein said address owner provides a key to a person selected from a predetermined list of persons at the time the address entry is established.

37. The system according to claim 36, wherein at least one of said persons selected from said predetermined list of persons is a merchant.

38. The system according to claim 36, wherein at least one of said persons selected from said predetermined list of persons is a shipper.

39. The system of claim 22, further wherein said address owner selects a shipper, and further wherein a first key is provided to said merchant and a second key is provided to said shipper.

40. The system of claim 39, further wherein upon completion of said transaction, said merchant sends an electronic message to a data processor for said online address directory, indicating that said address owner has directed said merchant to said online address directory to obtain said shipping address for said address owner on a date of delivery, identifying the shipper selected by said address owner, and requesting a key to access the address entry for said address owner in said online address directory, said message also being sent to said shipper, wherein

said data processor verifies the identity of the merchant,

said data processor verifies the identity of the shipper,

said data processor for said online address directory checks to see whether said merchant has been preselected to receive said first key by said address owner at the time said address owner established said address entry;

said data processor for said online address directory checks to see whether said shipper has been preselected to receive said second key by said address owner at the time said address owner established said address entry;

said data processor checks to see whether said merchant previously has been provided said first key by virtue of having been preselected by said address owner at the time said address owner established said address entry;

said data processor checks to see whether said shipper previously has been provided said second key by virtue of having been preselected by said address owner at the time said address owner established said address entry;

said data processor checks to see whether said first key previously provided to said merchant is valid;

said data processor checks to see whether said second key previously provided to said shipper is valid; and wherein

said data processor sends a first return message to said online merchant directing the online merchant to use said previously provided first key, and further wherein

said data processor sends a second return message to said shipper directing said shipper to use said previously provided second key.

41. The system of claim 39, further wherein upon completion of said transaction, said merchant sends an electronic message to a data processor for said online address directory, indicating that said address owner has directed said merchant to said online address directory to obtain said shipping address for said address owner on a date of delivery, identifying the shipper selected by said address owner, and requesting a key to access the address entry for said address owner in said online address directory, said message also being sent to said shipper, wherein

said data processor verifies the identity of the merchant,

said data processor verifies the identity of the shipper,

said data processor for said online address directory checks to see whether said merchant has been preselected by said address owner to receive said first key at the time said address owner established said address entry;

said data processor for said online address directory checks to see whether said shipper has been preselected by said address owner to receive said second key at the time said address owner established said address entry;

said data processor further checks to see whether said merchant previously has been provided said first key by virtue of having been preselected by said address owner at the time said address owner established said address entry;

said data processor further checks to see whether said shipper previously has been provided said second key by virtue of having been preselected by said address owner at the time said address owner established said address entry;

said data processor further checks to see whether said first key previously provided to said merchant is valid;

said data processor further checks to see whether said second key previously provided to said shipper is valid; and wherein

said data processor sends a first return message to said online merchant providing said merchant with a first key, and further wherein

said data processor sends a second return message to said shipper providing said shipper with a second key.

42. The system according to claim 39, wherein said first key is a first coded password and said second key is a second coded password, and further wherein

said merchant enters said unique identifier for said address owner, said date of delivery, and said first coded password into a first query in said online directory;

said first query returns a coded shipping label;

said merchant affixes said coded shipping label to a package containing merchandise ordered by said address owner in said transaction with said merchant;

said merchant forwards said package to said shipper;

said shipper enters said unique identifier for said address owner, said date of delivery, and said second coded password into a second query in said address directory; and wherein

said second query returns an answer providing a shipping address for said address owner on said date of delivery.

43. The system according to claim 39, wherein said first key is a first coded password, and further wherein

said merchant enters said unique identifier for said address owner, said date of delivery, and said first coded password into a first query in said online directory;

said first query returns a coded shipping label;

said merchant affixes said coded shipping label to a package containing merchandise ordered by said address owner in said transaction with said merchant;

said merchant forwards said package to said shipper;

said shipper decodes said shipping label to obtain said shipping address for said address owner on said date of delivery.

44. The system according to claim 39, wherein said first key is a first hyperlink to a first hyperlinked page in said online address directory, and said second key is a second hyperlink to a second hyperlinked page in said online address directory; further wherein

said merchant accesses said first hyperlinked page in said address directory and enters said unique identifier for said address owner and said date of delivery into a first query in said address entry;

said first query returns a coded shipping label;

said merchant affixes said coded shipping label to a package containing merchandise ordered by said address owner in said transaction with said merchant;

said merchant forwards said package to said shipper;

said shipper accesses said second hyperlinked page in said address directory and enters said unique identifier for said address owner and said date of delivery into a second query in said address directory; and wherein

said second query returns an answer providing a shipping address for said address owner on said date of delivery.

45. The system according to claim 39, wherein said first key is a first hyperlink to a first hyperlinked page in said online address directory, and said second key is a second hyperlink to a second hyperlinked page in said online address directory; further wherein

said merchant accesses said first hyperlinked page in said address directory and enters said unique identifier for said address owner and said date of delivery into a first query in said address entry;

said first query returns a coded shipping label;

said merchant affixes said coded shipping label to a package containing merchandise ordered by said address owner in said transaction with said merchant;

said merchant forwards said package to said shipper; and wherein

said shipper decodes said shipping label to obtain said shipping address for said address owner on said date of delivery.

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46. A system including an online address directory, the system comprising:
a registration receiver to receive registration information for an address owner
a receiver to receive information about a first user.

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an authenticator to authenticate an identity of the first user;
a customer ID receiver to receive a customer ID corresponding to the address owner;
a date receiver to receive a specific date from the first user; and
an address sender to retrieve address information from data storage and to send the address information of the address owner to the first user, the address information being valid for the specific date.

47. A method for providing real-time address information via an online address directory, comprising:

- (1) sending a message to the online address directory identifying a first user and requesting an access key;
- (2) sending a customer ID to the online address directory, the customer ID corresponding to an address owner;
- (3) sending a specific date to the online address directory; and
- (4) receiving, from the online address directory, an address of the address owner, the address being valid for the specific date.

48. A method for entering data into an address directory, comprising the steps of :

- (1) entering a customer ID into the address directory;
- (2) entering address information into the address directory;
- (3) entering at least one effective date for said address information;
- (3) entering a security level for said address information into the address directory;

- (4) entering information regarding a first user into the address directory; and
- (5) entering information regarding a second user into the address directory.

49. A machine-readable medium having instructions recorded thereon, such that when the instructions are read and executed by a machine, the machine performs a method comprising:

- (1) sending a message to an address directory identifying a first user and requesting an access key;
- (2) sending a customer ID to an address directory, the customer ID corresponding to an address owner;
- (3) sending a specific date to the address directory; and
- (4) receiving, from the address directory, an address of the address owner, the address being valid for the specific date.